

# PRESS RELEASE

## Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 26, 2002

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### CONYERS GAO STUDY FINDS THAT FEDERAL GUN LAWS DO NOT PROTECT BATTERED WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Conyers issued the following statement regarding the release of a draft study by the GAO regarding the loopholes in the National Background Check System (NICS) that allow domestic abusers access to firearms:

“At my request GAO studied loopholes in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) that allow domestic abusers access to firearms. We learned that the time we allow for background checks is not measured in hours, but in the lives of battered women and abused children.

There have been proposals presented in Congress, such as the NRA backed amendments that would shorten the time for background checks to 24 hours. Make no mistake, this study proves that these proposals will mean the lives of even more women and children will be endangered.

Although federal law prohibits these individuals from possessing firearms, loopholes in the NICS allow many dangerous abusers access to firearms. This is primarily because researching domestic violence offenses often takes longer than the three days currently allowed under the Brady Law. The study found that the percentage of NICS firearm-retrieval actions involving domestic violence misdemeanors was almost double when compared with the percentage of all NICS denials that involved domestic violence misdemeanors.

I was extremely disturbed to learn that nearly 3,000 convicted batterers and child abusers were able to purchase firearms between 1998-2001, despite federal laws designed to prevent this. Nearly 10 percent of the annual homicides involving the killing of a spouse or partner, almost all the victims were woman and most were killed using a firearm. We must do better.

First, law enforcement must have *more* time to accurately identify domestic batterers and prevent them getting guns, not less. Second, the quality of the records immediately available to the NICS needs to be improved.

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